
DIVERSITY PLAN

(UPDATE - JUNE 2002)

CULTURAL COMPETENCY

"A WAY OF LIFE"



New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Minority Health

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STATEMENT

It is with pride that the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (NH-DHHS) issues this update on our Diversity Plan to serve all citizens of New Hampshire.

The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services is committed to all citizens having access to quality health care and the ability to attain and maintain health and independence. Our State is enriched by the ever-expanding diversity of its population. Yet, we are faced with the reality that disparities exist between the health, social and economic well-being of cultural and ethnic minorities and the majority of the population. This Diversity Plan is dedicated to the elimination of those disparities.

The Department has taken several meaningful actions to better serve the citizens of New Hampshire. We have increased the cultural and linguistic resources available in the delivery of services, and we will continue to do so. We have joined with the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic communities of New Hampshire, through the New Hampshire Diversity Task Force, to create opportunities for all our citizens to provide input and dialogue for improved services. We have established an Office of Minority Health within the Department and appointed its Director

In addition, we are implementing a training curriculum for staff on cultural diversity, civil rights, social role valorization, and customer service. And, we continue to participate in professional partnerships with the US Department of Health and Human Services' Office for Civil Rights and Office for Minority Health to discuss and plan for equal opportunities for all New Hampshire citizens.

Recent accomplishments by NH-DHHS to better assist the diverse populations we serve include:

- An increase in the Department's multi-lingual capacity;
- The co-hosting of the Eliminating Health Disparities Conference, which resulted in a New Hampshire State Plan that focuses on the areas of Cultural Competency and Medical Interpretation to address the elimination of health disabilities;
- The translation of key documents into Spanish and Bosnian;
- The hosting of a statewide data symposium to heighten the level of awareness of the need for improved data collection and analysis of racial and ethnic data; and
- The implementation of a Cultural Competency, Civil Rights, Social Role Valorization, and Customer Service training program.

As you read the Department's Diversity Plan, we ask you to embrace the opportunities that new cultures and languages present to our consumers, programs and staff. Together we will learn new and respectful ways to relate to one another and provide better services to everyone.

DIVERSITY PLAN

Purpose

The NH-DHHS is committed to addressing diversity on individual, interpersonal and organizational levels. The Diversity Plan focuses on specific areas that include: continued assessment of NH-DHHS service levels and delivery methods; awareness training of cultural difference, changing attitudes, behaviors, cultural competency, and sensitivity; barrier free access to programs and services, benefits and resources; and cultural competency and specific employment goals, training opportunities, career development, and accountability.

These initiatives will include:

1. The design and implementation of NH-DHHS Diversity Plan Program Evaluation Instrument;
2. The development and implementation of a NH-DHHS Overall Racial and Ethnic Data Strategic Plan;
3. The expansion of sustaining partnerships with local, regional, and federal organizations for the purpose of establishing systemic, sustainable approaches to services;
4. The design and implementation of sustainable outreach strategies that maximize and combine federal, state, and community resources; and
5. The implementation of a Limited/non-English Proficiency Policy for NH-DHHS.

These initiatives will:

1. Foster a respectful work environment;
2. Promote a work environment that is free of discrimination, prejudice and disrespect;
3. Increase recruitment and retention of the most qualified and diverse staff;
4. Increase opportunities to involve a greater number of staff in diversity issues;
5. Increase multicultural and multilingual staff resources; and
6. Increase education and training opportunities to increase staff awareness of diversity issues.

Our current activities and the initiatives described above will improve our ability to serve our customers.

BACKGROUND

New Hampshire's population has grown dramatically over the last two decades, increasing in size from 800,000 to over 1.2 million residents. New Hampshire's racial and ethnic population has been a significant part of that growth. In the 1990 Census, it was estimated that NH's combined minority population (Asian, African American, Native American and Latino) represented approximately 2% of the State's population. According to the 2000 census, New Hampshire's minority population has doubled to 4%, with many of our new residents living in Hillsborough County and other parts of the southern tier of the State.

With this growth, NH-DHHS has seen increased opportunities and challenges in addressing the needs that new languages and cultures present to our services, programs and staff. In order to meet the Department's stated mission of providing quality care and services to all residents of New Hampshire, it is critical that we look at our ability to effectively meet these shifting and changing demands and create additional resources and strategies to address the required needs.

Culture and language have considerable impact on how consumers access and respond to health care services. To ensure equal access to quality health care by diverse populations, health care organizations and providers should develop and implement a diversity plan that will meet that objective. As one of the State's major providers of health and social services, NH-DHHS has created this Diversity Plan.

NATIONALLY RECOMMENDED STANDARDS

The following recommendations for *Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Health Care Services* (CLAS) were produced for the US Office of Minority Health, Public Health Service, US Department of Health and Human Services in response to an analytical review of key laws, regulations, cultural contacts, and standards currently in use by federal and state agencies and other national organizations. The 14 standards were developed initially with input from a national advisory committee of policymakers, providers, and researchers. Public hearings were held and, based on input, the CLAS standards were revised. Thus, CLAS represent well thought out and refined parameters upon which to build a culturally and linguistic competent system of healthcare and social service delivery.

National Standards

1. Promote and support the attitudes, behaviors, knowledge and skills necessary for staff to work respectfully and effectively with consumers and each other in a culturally diverse work environment;
2. Have a comprehensive management strategy to address culturally and linguistically appropriate services, including strategic goals, plans, policies, procedures and designated staff responsible for implementation;
3. Involvement in the design and execution of service delivery, including planning, policymaking, operations, evaluation, and training;
4. Develop and implement a strategy to recruit, retain and promote qualified diverse and culturally competent administrative, clinical, and support staff that are trained and qualified to address the needs of the racial and ethnic communities being served;
5. Require and arrange for ongoing education and training for administrative, clinical, and support staff in culturally and linguistically competent service delivery;
6. Provide all clients with Limited/non-English Proficiency access to bilingual staff or interpretation services;
7. Provide oral and written notices, including translated signage at key points of contact, to clients in their primary language informing them of their right to receive no-cost interpreter services;
8. Translate and make available signage and commonly used written consumer educational material and other materials for members of the predominant language groups in service areas;

9. Ensure that interpreters and bilingual staff can demonstrate bilingual proficiency and receive training that includes the skills and ethics of interpreting, and knowledge in both languages of the terms and concepts relevant to clinical or non-clinical encounters. Family or friends are not considered adequate substitutes because they usually lack these abilities;
10. Ensure that the clients' primary spoken language and self-identified race/ethnicity are included in the health care organization's management information system as well as any client records used by provider staff;
11. Use a variety of methods to collect and utilize accurate demographic, cultural epidemiological and clinical outcome data for racial and ethnic groups in the service area, and become informed about the ethnic/cultural needs, resources, and assets of the surrounding community;
12. Undertake ongoing organizational self-assessments of cultural and linguistic competence, and integrate measures of access, satisfaction, quality, and outcomes for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Health Care Services into other organizational internal audits and performance improvement programs;
13. Develop structures and procedures to address cross-cultural ethical and legal conflicts in health care delivery and complaints or grievances by patients and staff about unfair, culturally insensitive or discriminatory treatment, or difficulty in accessing services, or denial of services; and
14. Prepare an annual progress report documenting the organizations' progress with implementing Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Health Care Services standards, including information on programs, staffing, and resources.

Based on CLAS, along with the advise and recommendations from the NH-DHHS Commissioner's Office, Diversity Task Force, Diversity Work Group and District Office Administration, the Department has organized six key areas of our healthcare and social service system for goal development: Staff Development, Public Input, Consumer Access, Management Plan, Self Assessment and Data. Objectives have been defined for each of these areas. When combined together, these objectives form a comprehensive strategy to increase NH-DHHS' ability to deliver competent services and impart greater knowledge of and access to services for our residents.

NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES DIVERSITY PLAN GOAL STATEMENTS

Staff Development

To create a long range recruitment and retention plan to promote a diverse staff to address the needs of all consumers and to develop and implement a training and education program to deliver culturally and linguistically competent services.

Objectives:

- Recruitment of diverse staff. Design an outreach campaign to diverse communities through Job Fairs in Nashua, Keene, Manchester and other parts of the State;
- Through NH-DHHS' New Hampshire Office of Minority Health (NH-OMH), promote and support training, education and resource development for NH-DHHS staff to work respectfully and effectively in a culturally diverse environment;
- Provide training programs for NH-DHHS staff, including training programs on Cultural Competency, Civil Rights, Social Role Valorization and Customer Service; and
- Provide language training for interested staff on a voluntary basis.

Community Partnering

NH-OMH will actively engage in the design and implementation of services delivered through a public and private partnership of multi-cultural diverse and representative advisory groups providing input to policy, operations and evaluation.

Objectives:

- Collaborate with the US Office of Civil Rights to increase state and community awareness of Civil Rights Laws and responsibilities;
- Collaborate with the US Office of Minority Health (US-OMH) to develop and implement federal, regional, state and local strategies to eliminate health disparities in racial and ethnic groups;

- Partner with municipalities, communities, academic institutions and agencies to increase access to health care systems by creating an ongoing and sustainable Medical Interpreters Training System, including a training course on the effective use of interpreters;
- Establish that the Diversity Task Force, a multicultural and multilingual grouping of individuals, community representatives and agency leaders, provide oversight and evaluation on activities and successes of NH-DHHS' Diversity Plan; and
- Establish that the Diversity Task Force meet quarterly, with the Data and Research, Education and Training, and Advisory Group subcommittees.

Consumer Access

NH-DHHS is committed to the delivery of quality and competent healthcare services to all residents of New Hampshire, to actively reducing all internal barriers to accessing services, and to working collaboratively with community organizations and individuals to reduce external barriers to service.

Objectives:

- Implement a NH-DHHS Limited/non-English Proficiency Policy that addresses the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Right Act;
- Collaborate with the US Office of Civil Rights to increase awareness in New Hampshire of civil rights laws and responsibilities;
- Collaborate with other federal agencies, as appropriate, to reduce barriers to accessing services;
- Collaborate with municipalities, communities, academic institutions and agencies to increase access to health care systems by creating an ongoing and sustainable Medical Interpreters Training System in New Hampshire;
- Increase the availability of interpretative services in the Nashua, Manchester, Salem and other District Offices through the hiring of bilingual staff and the contracting for linguistic services where appropriate;
- Maintain a bank of voluntary NH-DHHS employees with bilingual skills for emergency use only;
- Create a multilingual telephone access system that will enable individuals to access information and to communicate with NH-DHHS staff to obtain services;

- Increase the number of key documents and informational brochures that are translated into predominant languages other than English;
- Using input from the NH Diversity Task Force and in collaboration with minority community based organizations, create a inventory of strengths and resources in key communities; and
- Create and distribute key signage to be posted in appropriate locations throughout NH-DHHS facilities to encourage the use of interpretive services by individuals who need it.

Accountability

The NH-OMH will work collaboratively with other New Hampshire State agencies and programs, community-based organizations, the Diversity Task Force and the NH-DHHS Management Advisory Group to assess and provide an annual update on NH-DHHS' progress in implementing the Diversity Plan.

Objectives:

- Develop a process whereby NH-DHHS will measure cultural and linguistic competencies and service related outcomes;
- Through a variety of methods, collect and utilize accurate demographic, cultural epidemiological and clinical outcome data for racial and ethnic groups in the service area, and become knowledgeable of the ethnic/cultural needs, resources, and assets of the surrounding communities;
- Provide barrier free access to complaint processes related to NH-DHHS services; and
- Provide an annual progress/status report on NH-DHHS' current cultural and linguistic diversification initiatives.

Performance Outcomes

The NH-DHHS, through a combination of methods that include input from NH-OMH, the Diversity Task Force, consumers and key members of NH-DHHS' management and staff, will assess the progress of providing barrier free services to all residents of New Hampshire.

Objectives:

- Establish an evaluation methodology to assess NH-DHHS' overall diversity performance;
- Gather formal feedback through quarterly meetings and surveys from the Diversity Task Force; and
- Gather informal feedback through the NH-DHHS' Management Advisory Group and consumers.

Data

NH-DHHS will develop a long-range strategic plan for the collection and management of racial and ethnic data.

Objectives:

- Collaborate with community based organizations to conduct a statewide Minority Data Symposium to elevate public awareness of the need for quality racial and ethnic data and the appropriate use of the data;
- Analyze NH-DHHS' databases to improve the collection and use of racial and ethnic descriptors, including demographics and service delivery; and
- Develop a set of recommendations for future data collection efforts utilizing racial and ethnic descriptors.

NH-DHHS PROGRESS REPORT

The first draft of the Diversity Plan was completed in the spring of 2000 and there has been much activity and work on each goal area since that time. With the help of NH-OMH, the hard work of key state leaders and department heads, and the support and dedicated efforts of our community partners, we have made significant progress. The following is a progress report for the Department on the aforementioned Goals and Objectives.

Staff Development

One of the primary objectives has been to strengthen the capacity of District Offices to engage individuals with Limited/non-English Proficiency. NH-DHHS' Human Resources Office held job fairs and career days inviting members of racial and ethnic communities in Keene, Nashua and Manchester to explore job opportunities in the Department for which they were qualified.

One of the outcomes of the job fairs was the hiring of a full-time Bi-lingual/Bi-cultural Interpreter/ Case Technician to assist with Spanish language barriers in the Manchester District Office. Additional interpreter services were also made available in the Manchester and Nashua District Offices through contracted services. To help strengthen the current English speaking staff's ability to engage our clients, NH-DHHS' Human Resources supported interested staff in attending a conversational Spanish course and brought a Spanish Instructor into the District Office in Nashua to teach Spanish on site to staff. To expand the District Offices understanding, knowledge and skill in providing linguistic and culturally competent services, a training program has been designed and implemented. This activity has resulted in a more diversified group of employees, increasing our ability to provide services to a diverse population. It is imperative to continue to provide a base of support to our current staff and to create an inviting work environment that embraces all employees and allows us to meet the diverse needs of our clients.

Community Partnering

To better understand our strengths and weaknesses in providing culturally and linguistically competent services, we have specifically engaged individuals, organizations and agencies at the federal, state and local level to provide us with input on the issues of access that currently exist and to participate, on an ongoing basis, in assisting NH-DHHS develop strategies for reducing barriers to services. These initiatives include:

- NH-OMH co-hosted, with the Vermont Office of Minority Health, a regional conference on *Eliminating Health Disparities*. Individual State Plans for the elimination of health disparities were developed during the conference. New Hampshire's State Plan identifies two priorities in addressing disparity, Cultural Competency and Medical Interpretation.

- NH-DHHS funded, through its Community Grant Program, the development of a Medical Interpretation training system. The Endowment for Health partnered with NH-DHHS, the NH Minority Health Coalition and the Southern NH Area Health Education Center to create the system and train providers in the appropriate and effective use of Medical Interpreters.
- NH-DHHS created the Diversity Task Force, a partnership of public and community agencies and individuals to serve as an advisory group.
- NH-DHHS created an internal high-level management advisory team to work with NH-OMH.

Consumer Access

Through the process of tracking the needs of consumers in our District Offices, beginning March 2000, we were able to identify language, particularly Spanish, as one of the key issues to address in increasing access to NH-DHHS services. As a result, NH-DHHS hired Spanish/Bosnian interpreters to work in our Nashua and Manchester District Offices where we have the highest level of clients with Limited/non-English Proficiency. We have translated key documents into foreign languages. We have created a bank of NH-DHHS staff volunteers who are bilingual in a variety of languages and who could serve as interpreters in instances that require immediate intervention. In the event there is no member of NH-DHHS' staff who is able to provide immediate interpretive services in the requested language, the Department has identified a phone based language interpreter service as an option that can be used by staff. As noted above, we have established training programs to enhance and ensure civil rights and cultural competency among our staff.

In addition to addressing language as a barrier to services, NH-DHHS continues to work closely with community organizations on Disabilities to examine other barriers to services.

Performance Outcomes

We have established processes to manage the activities of the Department in its progress towards providing culturally and linguistically competent health care and social services to all residents of New Hampshire. Demographic data processes have been established to help identify the needs of consumers of NH-DHHS services.

Data

Significant progress has been made in advancing the Department's data collection, analysis, reporting and utilization of information on racial, ethnic and disabled populations. NH-OMH has received a small grant from the US-OMH to develop a Strategic Plan for racial and ethnic data. As part of that grant, the New England Coalition for Health Equity and the NH-OMH have:

- Examined NH-DHHS databases regarding the procedures and practices of collecting racial and ethnic data and prepared a draft report on the findings;
- In collaboration with the NH Minority Health Coalition and the Southern NH Area Health Education Center, hosted a statewide data symposium to heighten the level of awareness of the need for improved data collection and analysis of racial and ethnic data; and
- NH-OMH formed a Racial and Ethnic Data work group to specifically assist in the development of a set of recommendations to NH-DHHS for future data collection processes.

NH-DHHS DIVERSITY PLAN: NEXT STEPS

The staff, managers, supervisors and leaders of NH-DHHS should be proud of the work that has been accomplished toward sustaining our commitment to provide quality and competent care to all of New Hampshire's residents.

Listed below is an outline of some of the activities that NH-DHHS and NH-OMH will undertake over the next year.

Staff Development

- Compete the Civil Rights, Cultural Competency, Social Role Valorization and Customer Service training program;
- NH-DHHS' Human Resources Office continue promoting, in our racial and ethnic communities, workforce opportunities;
- Complete the development of a staff resource guide for individuals with any special needs, including individuals with cultural and/or linguistic needs and individuals with disabilities; and
- Conduct periodic needs assessment of NH-DHHS staff regarding our ability to serve diverse populations.

Community Partnering

- NH-OMH will continue to collaborate with the US-OMH, US Office for Civil Rights, NH-DHHS' Human Resources office and Services Administration, Health Care Finance Administration and others; and
- Continue to collaborate with community- based organizations to deliver competent health care and social services to racial and ethnic populations, individuals with disabilities and other underserved populations of New Hampshire.

Consumer Access

- Conduct focus group sessions with individuals and community based organizations to further assess barriers to services;

- Participate and collaborate in formal focus group research specifically designed to examine issues of health disparities, starting with maternal and child health issues in our racial and ethnic communities; and
- Continue to participate in the Region I New England Minority Health Planning Committee, building the 3rd Eliminating Health Disparities Conference with the specific focus of further advancing the New Hampshire State Plan for Eliminating Health Disparities.

Data

- Complete the database analysis and make comprehensive recommendations to the Commissioner of NH-DHHS.

Performance Outcomes

- Develop a comparative analysis of New Hampshire's Diversity Plan progress as measured against that of the other New England States, particularly the northern New England states.

Accountability

- To effectively measure progress towards both the continued development of a diverse and competent health care social service delivery workforce and the reduction of barriers to services, NH-DHHS, through the NH-OMH, will continue to report to and receive feedback from individuals and all of its partners at the federal, state, local levels.

We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color.

Maya Angelou